

## **Loop 303 to I-17 work scheduled for 2008**

By Carolyn Dryer  
Peoria Times

When Doug Nintzel began his address to the Peoria Chamber of Commerce last week, the first thing he said was, "It's not my fault."

Nintzel told the audience he knows that a lot of people who live in Arizona, and especially the Valley, are frustrated about the condition of roadways in the state, and the traffic congestion.

To give people a better understanding of where the Arizona Department of Transportation is situated, the agency's media relations spokesman showed a graph, indicating the population of Phoenix and Maricopa County in 1950 to the present time.

In 1950, there were 106,818 people living in Phoenix, 331,770 in Maricopa County.

In 2000, Phoenix's population had zoomed to 1,321,045, while Maricopa County's population stood at 2,954,157.

In 2030, the population of Phoenix is projected to be 2.2 million, while Maricopa County is expected to be home to more than six million.

"This is the challenge we face at ADOT," Nintzel said.

But will there be a freeway party for residents of the West Valley similar to those they have witnessed taking place in various parts of the East Valley?

There may be one when the new section of Loop 303 is completed, Nintzel said. That section is scheduled to break ground next year.

But it is not all about ADOT, Nintzel said. The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) approves plans for regional freeways in Maricopa County. ADOT follows the "blueprint" the regional plan outlines, tracks the costs and advises MAG of adjustments. ADOT designs and builds the projects. The State Transportation Board approves construction contracts and five-year programs.

Proposition 400 extended the half-cent sales tax (originally approved in 1985) for transportation another 20 years starting in 2006. This was a key component of the \$15.8 billion expected to be spent over the next 20 years of the regional transportation plan.

First on the list is the extension of Loop 303 to I-17 (Black Canyon Freeway). That is Phase I.

New lanes are also scheduled for construction on I-17 between Loop 101 and the Carefree Highway, hoping to end the bottleneck that now exists during rush-hour traffic and weekends.

Carpool lanes are scheduled for construction on State Route 51 between Shea Boulevard and Loop 101.

Carpool lanes are scheduled on Loop 101 between Princess Drive and the 202 Santan Freeway.

New lanes are scheduled on I-10 between the I-17 and Loop 101.

Nintzel said seven projects on the freeway are slated to start this year. One is the Carefree Highway interchange, in addition to the I-17 widening above Loop 101.

There are also two new interchanges on I-17 slated for completion at Dixileta Drive and Jomax Road.

Why is ADOT planning to widen Grand Avenue?

One reason, Nintzel said, is because Grand is a primary urban arterial connection. Next year, work begins on Grand between 83rd and 99th avenues, and 99th to Loop 303, which is a separate project. Nintzel said businesses along Grand are being notified of upcoming work.

Grand to McDowell Road improvements on Loop 101 are also planned, Nintzel said.

One of the reasons so many projects have been speeded up, Nintzel said, was the Statewide Transportation Acceleration Needs (STAN) account. He said Gov. Janet Napolitano and the Legislature approved \$307 million in state funds to speed up projects. At the same time, ADOT worked with regional planning organizations across the state to set priorities. In the MAG region, \$185 million was allocated.

STAN projects in the Valley include:

- I-17/Carefree Highway to Anthem Way n 2009 instead of 2023.
- I-10/Sarival Road to Verrado Way n 2009 not 2023.
- Loop 101 carpool lanes in North Valley and south of Baseline Road n 2008.
- Loop 303 interchange and bridge work at Bell, Cactus and Waddell Roads n 2008.
- Williams Gateway rights of way protections n 2007.

How are we doing in the federal funding department?

“Arizona receives 91 cents for each dollar we send to Washington,” Nintzel said. “We’re seen as a donor state. Over the years, the amount has gone up, but it is not keeping up with growth.”

Nintzel responded to a question about light rail by saying ADOT is in favor of multi-modal transportation. However, freight companies (using railroads) want to protect their turf and schedules, he said, “so that has to be worked out.”

To stay posted on freeway traffic reduction, visit [www.az511.com](http://www.az511.com), or call 511.

To learn about ADOT, visit [www.azdot.gov](http://www.azdot.gov), click on “Valley freeways.”

To obtain more information, call the ADOT Communication and Community Partnerships Office at (602) 712-7355.

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